

REMARKS

Claims 1-15 are pending. Claims 1 and 11 have been amended. Figure 1 has been amended. No new matter has been presented.

The drawings are objected to as failing to comply with 37 CFR 1.84(p)(5) for not including reference sign "r2" mentioned in the specification. Replacement drawings are included with this response, and withdrawal of the objection is respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 2, 5-8 and 10-15 are rejected under 35 USC 102(e) as being anticipated by Yura, U.S. Patent No. 6,795,678. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claims 1 and 11 recite "a one-piece nip forming member." Yura fails to teach or suggest this feature.

Yura discloses a fixing device in which a first nip L1 is formed between the press roller 17 and the belt 15 by the stationary member 19, and in which a second nip L2 is formed between the press roller 17 and the belt 15 by the fixing roller 18. The first nip L1 and the second nip L2 are not continuous between the stationary member 19 and fixing roller 18, and thus the fixing pressure or nip pressure generated between the press roller 17 and the belt 15 is lower in the area between the stationary member 19 and the fixing roller 18.

In contrast to the device of Yura, claims 1 and 11 recite that the fixing nip is formed only by the nip forming member which is a one-piece member. The resulting device has a continuous fixing nip formed only by the one-piece nip forming member, and thereby the pressure distribution in the fixing nip is made generally flat with respect to a paper feeding direction. Yura fails to teach or suggest that the nip-forming member is a one-piece member, and thus Yura fails to teach or suggest the features of claims 1 and 11.

Claims 2, 5-8, 10 and 12-15 are allowable at least due to their respective dependencies. Applicants request that this rejection be withdrawn.

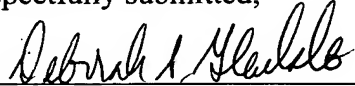
Claims 3, 4 and 9 are rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Yura. Claims 3, 4 and 9 are allowable at least due to their respective dependencies and because Yura

fails to teach or suggest all of the features for which it is cited. Applicants request that this rejection be withdrawn.

In the event the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office determines that an extension and/or other relief is required, applicants petition for any required relief including extensions of time and authorize the Commissioner to charge the cost of such petitions and/or other fees due in connection with the filing of this document to Deposit Account No. 03-1952 referencing docket no. 20455232500.

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Respectfully submitted,

By 

Deborah S. Gladstein

Registration No.: 43,636

MORRISON & FOERSTER LLP

1650 Tysons Blvd, Suite 300

McLean, Virginia 22102

(703) 760-7753

Attachments

REPLACEMENT SHEET

AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAWINGS

The attached sheet(s) of drawings includes changes to Fig. 1.

Attachment: Replacement sheet